

The MoS is happy to describe himself as a grammar fascist and is concerned that the excessive use of jargon endangers DFID's reputation. If we use language the rest of the world doesn't understand, we diminish that reputation. For that reason, all of our communications and, in particular submissions, must be immediately explicable to the non-DFID reader. Clear language conveys clear thought. Its poor use suggests sloppy thinking.

Officials are therefore required to express themselves in sentences which can be parsed and with grammar that sets a high standard. It irks when nouns are used as verbs, apostrophes are left off (or misplaced), compound adjectives (such as UN-led) are not hyphenated, and sentences are begun with "But" or "However".

The MoS would prefer that we did not "leverage" or "mainstream" anything, and whereas he is happy for economies to grow, he does not like it when we "grow economies". Nor is he impressed with the loose and meaningless use of "going forward", either at the beginning or the end of any sentence.

Thus we do not ever "access", "catalyse", "showcase" or "impact" anything.

Nearly as depressing for him is reading about DFID's work in "the humanitarian space".

He finds it annoying when conjunctions such as "which" or "that" are inexplicably dropped in a way which ruins the flow and logic of a sentence. He would also prefer to meet someone than "meet with" them. Likewise, a sentence which begins "Grateful for your..." would appear to be lacking the prefix "I would be...".

The constant repetition of a word such as "resilience" as a substitute for saying what is meant, risks rendering a submission purposeless.

Submissions should have a logical flow and not attempt to fill the page with every conceivable fact that can be retrieved by cut and paste.

No draft letter should ever use the scruffy old letter head template which has a big DFID and big UKAid logo at the top – all must be deleted and banished. Ministerial style only.

All email templates must express phone numbers properly – "0207" is wrong (it should be "020 7123"), mobile numbers are five then six digits: if you want to write "+44" do not add the "0" in brackets. Email chains should delete extraneous space and words, and in particular all previous disclaimers.

Disclaimer: MoS is always willing to be challenged about his judgments on grammatical standards and will not take offence at a properly reasoned opinion.

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